

Board of Chiropractic Examiners

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Physical Therapy Procedures in Chiropractic Practice

The scope of chiropractic practice is set forth in Title 16, Division 4, Section 302 of the California Code of Regulations. Section 302(a)(2) states that “As part of a course of chiropractic treatment, a duly licensed chiropractor may use all necessary mechanical, hygienic, and sanitary measures incident to the care of the body, including, but not limited to, air, cold, diet, exercise, heat, light, massage, physical culture, rest, ultrasound, water, and physical therapy techniques in the course of chiropractic manipulations and/or adjustments.”

The phrase “in the course of chiropractic manipulations and/or adjustments” means that during the care of the patient with chiropractic methods, including manipulations and/or adjustments, a duly licensed chiropractor may use physical therapy procedures to further the goals of the chiropractic treatment. The law does not affix a percentage of the visits in a course of treatment of a patient, which must include chiropractic manipulation/adjustment; this is left to the judgment and discretion of the doctor of chiropractic. It is assumed that chiropractic manipulation/adjustment, when indicated, will become a major portion of the treatment rendered.

There are, of course, conditions which may contraindicate chiropractic manipulation/adjustment. With some conditions (i.e., acceleration/deceleration injury to cervical spine) manipulation/adjustment may not be incorporated into the treatment program initially, but will be within a relatively short period of time. This is understood by the Board as reasonable and well within the scope of practice. For other conditions (i.e., post-surgical rehabilitation of the knee) manipulation/adjustment will not be incorporated into the treatment program at any point. The Board perceives this as representing a violation of Section 302 (a) (2).